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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001740

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIALS MEET TO ADDRESS BENUE/TARABA BORDER
VIOLENCE

REF: REF: ABUJA 1593

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Robert E. Gribbin for reasons 1.4.(b&d
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[¶1](#). SUMMARY. An unidentified U.N. official was shot enroute to a peacekeeping meeting along the Benue / Taraba border on August 9. The meeting was called by Benue State Governor Gabriel Suswam in an effort to address the ongoing violence occurring between the ethnic tribes of Benue and Taraba States. Security forces on both sides agree there needs to be an increased police presence and tighter border control. Additionally, both states are looking to traditional rulers and community leaders to quell the violence rather than relying on military force. END SUMMARY.

[¶2](#). A yet to be identified U.N. official was shot and his Mobile Police escort killed while en route to a peacekeeping meeting in Gawa along the Benue / Taraba State border on August 9. Witnesses reported seeing the official being taken to a hospital in an ambulance. No word on his condition as of August 13. Government officials attributed the attack to opportunistic armed robbers cashing in on the conflict; however, this downplays the deterioration of the rule of law in the area. Ethnic violence began in this region over fifty years ago and continues today. Approximately 200 people on both sides of the feud have been killed since the violence re-erupted in June.

[¶3](#). Governor of Benue State Gabriel Suswam and his counterpart from Taraba, Governor Danbaba Danfulani Suntai, held a peacekeeping meeting in the town of Gawa, in the Katsina Ala Local Government Area along the border on August [¶9](#). Traditional rulers, community leaders, Police Commissioners and State Security Service members attended to discuss the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Tiv people of Benue State and both the Kuteb and Jukun tribes of Taraba State. In an effort to deter future violence, Governor Suswam is looking to the traditional rulers and local community leaders for assistance. Since this conflict has existed for generations, officials are hoping that these local rulers will convince the young people who have taken up the fight that violence is not the answer. To ensure that the local leaders do get involved and no longer ignore the

feuding, attendees at the peace meeting decided that traditional and community rulers should be held responsible for any violence that occurs in their area or amongst their tribe, with penalties including the possibility of arrest, trial and jail. Governor Suswam told PolOff that he and other officials are hoping the local leaders will have enough influence to stop the violence so as to avoid the need for another large military deployment to the area. Governor Suswam also informed PolOff that security forces will be increased along the border to stop the violence from crossing state lines. Currently there is nothing prohibiting a group from chasing their rivals across the border to conduct attacks on other tribes and their villages.

¶4. Police Commissioner Ibiyinka Kayode told PolOff that he is hoping to set up a permanent police outpost along the border in an effort to maintain peace. Currently officers are deployed only when conflict bubbles up. As well, Kayode stated that he has requested additional resources to increase the police force. As of now, there are less than six thousand police officers in all of Benue State with a population of almost 3 million. That is equal to one policeman for every 500 people. Unfortunately, most of the force is centered in the major towns and not in the rural areas where many of the land conflicts occur.

¶5. COMMENT: Despite ongoing discussions between the governors and officials on both sides of the conflict, the violence continues between the Benue and Taraba State ethnic tribes. Increased border control and a better equipped police force with greater presence in the area would only offer temporary peace. Placing blame on supposed armed robbers and ignoring the fact that this is a long-standing and deep-seeded ethnic conflict over farmland will only allow the anger and resentment to build and the violence to increase. Holding traditional rulers and community leaders

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responsible for the actions of their youth along with economic development in the area offers the best hope for a peaceful future between Benue and Taraba States. END
COMMENT.
GRIBBIN